

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Southern Nevada District Manager's Report
Patrick Gubbins, Acting District Manager
September 21, 2012

National BLM/DOI:

BLM Releases Yearly Updates to Mineral Cost Recovery Fee Schedule

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published in the Federal Register the final rule updating the fees it charges to recover costs incurred in processing documents associated with oil, gas, coal, and solid mineral activities. The updated fees cover costs for actions, including lease applications, name changes, corporate mergers, and lease consolidations and reinstatements.

The BLM is authorized to charge cost recovery fees under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and the 2005 Cost Recovery Rule. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also directed Federal agencies to recover their costs for services.

BLM Extends Deadline for Private Land Wild Horse Ecosanctuary Proposals

The BLM extended its deadline for private land wild horse ecosanctuary proposals to September 19. The ecosanctuaries, to be publicly accessible with a potential for ecotourism, would help the BLM feed and care for excess wild horses that have been removed from Western public rangelands. Each proposed ecosanctuary must be able to support at least 100 wild horses.

The official notice of solicitation can be found at <http://www.grants.gov> under opportunity number L12AS00140. For more information, please contact Susan Kaller, Grants Management Officer, at 775-861-6559 or Zachary Reichold, Senior Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at 202-912-7261.

Southern Nevada District Office (SNDO):

BLM Seeks Public Comment on Desert Tortoise Translocation: The BLM Southern Nevada and Ely Districts announced the availability of a draft environmental assessment (EA) to address translocation of desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) from the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center to 17 wilderness areas, five wilderness study areas and other non-wilderness lands within the districts. The comment period was open August 14 - September 14.

The environmental assessment evaluates the impacts associated with translocating desert tortoise to potential recipient areas within Clark, southern Nye, and southern Lincoln Counties. Potential areas will allow for more flexibility and options in addition to the ongoing use of the Large Scale

Translocation Site located near Jean. Translocation includes the moving of tortoises from the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (located at the southern edge of the Las Vegas Valley) back into the wild. Translocated tortoises have the potential to play an important role in recovery of the species through population augmentation, monitoring, research, and other recovery actions.

You can view the draft EA by accessing the BLM Southern Nevada District website at www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo.html where it will be listed "In the Spotlight." Select "Desert Tortoise Translocation Draft Environmental Assessment." A final decision on the EA is expected by October 2012.

Southern Nevada Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision September 2012:

Since the last presentation to the RAC, the Southern Nevada office has been working on the Alternatives Development (Chapter 2) of the RMP revision. This chapter of the RMP describes the management goals, objectives, and direction for the Plan. We have had some problems with getting this chapter drafted, and we are still in the process of writing this chapter and hope to have it completed by the end of the September.

Some of the critical issues are renewable energy, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and land disposals. The interdisciplinary team and the contractor have been working together to work through these issues. We also hosted a cooperating agencies meeting in May to discuss the alternatives development and to receive comments and suggestions from them. Most of the cooperators provided comments to the chapter.

After chapter 2 is completed, we will begin Chapter 4 - Environmental Analysis (Chapter 3 is completed). This chapter will analyze the impacts from the actions identified in Chapter 2. We have three meetings scheduled with the contractor to develop chapter 4. We are estimating a public draft date of Spring/early Summer 2013.

Division of Fire and Aviation:

BLM Plans to Implement Red Rock Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project this Fall: The purpose of this project is to reduce the spread and intensity of wildland fires, protect public and private infrastructure, and protect and enhance native habitat in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. These project objectives will be accomplished by treating non-native invasive annual grasses and their seed bank using two herbicides to create fuel breaks along roads, trails, natural features, and existing burn scars. Some areas will become temporarily inaccessible during herbicide treatments. However, project implementation will be coordinated to minimize impacts to visitors.

The BLM is planning to contract the work. The solicitation and contracting process is underway. The project is scheduled to begin in October and will conclude at the end of February 2013. Treatments may resume in September 2013 and conclude at the end of February 2014.

On September 20, the BLM made an informational presentation on the planned implementation of the Red Rock Canyon Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project during an open house at the Red Rock visitor center.

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Division:

BLM Opens Nominations for Funding from the Southern Nevada Public Land

Management Act: BLM opened the nomination period for Round 14 project proposals funded under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). The nomination period opened on Sept. 10 and closes Friday, Nov. 9. In portions of Carson City, Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine counties, local governmental entities may seek SNPLMA funds for parks, trails, and natural areas, while Federal agencies may seek funds for capital improvements, conservation initiatives, and other restoration work specific to eastern Nevada. Federal, State, and other agencies may seek SNPLMA funds for hazardous fuels reduction in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Carson Range, and the Spring Mountain Range. Federal agencies may seek funding for acquisition of environmentally sensitive land statewide.

Specific requirements for nominating projects, including entities eligible within the different categories, are available at www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/snplma.html. Nominations must be submitted directly to the BLM Southern Nevada District Office, SNPLMA Division, 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada 89130. All Round 14 nominations must be submitted by 4:30 pm PST on Nov. 9, 2012. Land acquisition nominations require early submittal of a two-to-three page nomination summary and a preliminary title report by 4:30 pm PST on Wednesday, Oct. 10. The summary form for this submittal is available on the SNPLMA website at the link listed above. Late nominations will not be accepted. For more information, please call (702) 515-5063.

Field Offices

Red Rock/Sloan Field Office:

Guest Climbing Permits Available at Red Rock Canyon: Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area announces the opening of Guest Climbing Special Recreation Permits for 2013. These permits authorize commercial guided or educational rock climbing in Red Rock Canyon for up to 10 days in 2013. Four educational and eight commercial Guest Climbing Permits are available.

The permits will be issued through a lottery system if more applications are received than available permits. Those interested in applying for a Guest Climbing Permit, should submit a completed application by September 30, 2012 to the Red Rock/Sloan Field Office: HCR 33 Box 5500, Las Vegas, NV 89161. Notification of selected applicants will be made by October 30, 2012. For more information please visit the Red Rock website at <http://blm.gov/9kkd>.

Tour Business Opportunities Available at Red Rock Canyon: BLM is now accepting applications from those interested in offering guided services at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Available commercial Special Recreation Permits (SRP) include two full-time guided OHV tours, one full-time guided bicycle tour, one full-time guided horseback tour,

one tour on the scenic drive only, and one full-time interpretive hike service. Commercial use SRPs are required for individuals and business which use the public lands for business or financial gain; including gratuities, donations, gifts, bartering, etc.

Those interested in applying for a commercial Special Recreation permit should submit a completed application by November 1, 2012 to the Red Rock/Sloan Field Office: HCR 33 Box 5500, Las Vegas, NV 89161. Applications will be rated and an applicant chosen from the most qualified applicants. Notification of selected applicants will be made by January 2013. For more information, including prospectus packet, please visit the Red Rock website at <http://blm.gov/9kkd>.

Red Rock Visitor Center Reels in Another Award: The LEED certified visitor center at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation won another award! Line and Space, llc – designer of the visitor center -- received an American Architecture Award for 2012. The award is given by The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies and The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design.

The American Architectural Awards are the highest and most prestigious distinguished building awards program that honors new and cutting-edge design. The annual program, organized by both institutions, also promotes American architectural design to the public audience at large. The program has become the most significant and most comprehensive distinguished awards program in the United States.

The Red Rock visitor center was designed to encourage stewardship for public land by providing an outdoor experience that instills a sense of personal responsibility. The Secretary of the Interior approved expenditure of \$23.1 million, under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, to build a new visitor center to provide enhanced visitor services to the increasing number of people who visit the National Conservation Area each year.

Las Vegas Field Office:

Nellis Dunes Recreation Area (NDRA) Health Risk Assessment Update: Data from the prior Nellis Dunes Dust Study was included in a manuscript published by the US Geological Survey. The manuscript was peer reviewed, revised and is now published in Aeolian Research. Field mapping was conducted over 14 days in May – June 2012. Approximately 54% of the NDRA has been mapped. Dust samples were prepared for mice-dosing experiments.

Three very large samples were collected for analysis and 157 new samples were collected for geochemical analysis. Off-road vehicle experiments continued and dust concentration measurements are being conducted with BLM personnel. These experiments must be conducted in perfectly calm conditions, and fall and winter are the most ideal seasons.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Quality Assurance (QA) procedures continued to be developed and/or revised or modified as needed. The Toxicology group met with the QA team and modified and updated twenty-one (21) SOPs. Toxicology research this quarter included approval of Environmental Protection Agency protocol for an additional method of blood collection. Additional UNLV training of university staff took place. All technicians are now

proficient in all animal handling methods. Laboratory space has been expanded to double the original size and includes additional equipment. The new space will improve security and meet Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) requirements. A quality assurance inspection concurs that this new space and security will be optimal for meeting GLP.

Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP): The RAMPs are still on hold until BLM finalizes Chapter 2 for the Resource Management Plan.

Red Rock Debuts as Banding Site:

The Southern Nevada District Office is now part of the Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN). The HMN is an international effort to monitor the populations, migration, demographics and diseases of hummingbirds. The HMN has more than 30 banding sites in the USA, Canada and Mexico.

The newest banding site is at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The first banding session was held July 21. BLM caught 24 individual birds, three species (Anna's, Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds). Most of the birds captured hatched this year. BLM was lucky to have five volunteers and two members of the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive assist with the project.

Pahrump Field Office/Renewable Energy Coordination Office:

BLM Gathers Nuisance Burros from Red Rock Area: The BLM collected nuisance burros in the Blue Diamond community near the Red Rock National Conservation Area (NCA). The lasted about two weeks.

The nuisance burros were gathered because they pose a safety hazard along State Route 159 and cause property damage in Blue Diamond. Since October 2010, at least 13 burros were killed or had to be euthanized due to vehicle collisions. Although, the roadway is completely fenced, the wild burros still manage to get in the road looking for food from the tourists and locals who feed them. This encourages the wild burros to stand on, and along, the roadways begging for food. Feeding the animals has caused approximately 30-40 burros to lose their wild characteristics and normal fear of humans and vehicles.

BLM planned to collect approximately 30 burros from the Blue Diamond area, utilizing a temporary bait trap consisting of a series of corral panels and hay. The burros will be available for adoption Saturday, Sept 22. The timing of this collection is important, as burro-vehicle accidents usually increase during September and October as the weather begins cooling off and more visitation and traffic increases through the Red Rock NCA.

How Southern Nevada Drought is Impacting Wild Horses and Burros: Drought conditions have intensified in Southern Nevada, even with the recent precipitation. Several natural springs and water developments are drying up and disappearing. We have begun hauling water to the

Nevada Wild Horse Range and the Red Rock Herd Management Area (HMA) to help the wild horses in those locations. The BLM is concerned about the health of the wild horses. Currently, the wild horses in the Nevada Wild Horse Range are not in poor body condition; however, the Red Rock wild horses are moderately thin to thin. Their conditions could change in a very short amount of time due to the drought conditions.

The BLM has volunteers monitoring the water developments and animal conditions in Red Rock. The Red Rock HMA is part of the Spring Mountains Complex to the west of Las Vegas. The Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 16-27 wild horses and 29-49 wild burros. The current population is estimated at 58-70 wild horses and 73-100 wild burros. The Nevada Wild Horse Range is in Nye County due east of Tonopah. The AML is 300-500 wild horses. The current population is estimated at 312-374 wild horses. Both areas have had a history of water hauling and emergency gathers to remove animals and save them from the lack of forage and water caused by drought conditions.